

REMARKS

This paper is presented in response to the non-final official action of January 9, 2008, wherein (a) claims 1-16 were pending, (b) claims 9-16 were withdrawn from consideration pursuant to a restriction requirement, (c) claim 1 was objected to, (d) claim 7 was rejected under 35 USC 112, 2nd paragraph for indefiniteness, (e) claims 1 and 5 were rejected under 35 USC 102(b) as anticipated by Joo, et al. US 6,277,324 B1 ("Joo"), and (f) claims 2, 3, and 6-8 were rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as obvious over Joo in view of Kepplinger, et al. US 6,379,420 B1 ("Kepplinger").

No basis for rejection of claim 4 has been stated.

This response is timely filed, as it is accompanied by a petition for automatic extension of time to file in the first month, with the requisite petition fee.

Reconsideration is requested.

The issues raised in the outstanding action are addressed below in the order appearing in the action.

Election/Restrictions

The provisional election to prosecute the invention of Group I, i.e., claims 1-8, is hereby affirmed. Non-elected claims 9-16 have been cancelled.

Claim Objections

Claim 1 was objected to due to the examiner's reading of the final phrase as a separate limitation. Consistent with the examiner's kind suggestion, claim 1 has been amended to read "in converting the iron-containing mixture to a reduced material, directly supplying and combusting oxygen to and in the fluidized bed ,to whichreducing gas flows during the conversion of the mixture to a reduced material in the fluidized bed." Therefore, it is believed the indefiniteness rejection has been overcome, and an indication to that effect is solicited.

Claim Rejections – 35 USC 102 and 103

Claims 1 and 5 have been rejected as anticipated by Joo, and claims 2, 3, and 6-8 have been rejected as obvious over Joo taken in view of Kepplinger. Claim 4 has not been rejected in view of the art.

The claims have been amended for clarity, and to more clearly define the invention over the cited art.

Claim 1, the only independent claim in the application, has been amended to recite that oxygen is directly supplied to the fluidized bed and combusted therein, in the presence of reducing gas flowing to the fluidized bed, during the conversion of the particulate iron-containing mixture to a reduced material. As a result, the oxygen is directly supplied to the fluidized-bed, where the temperature of the reducing gas is inherently raised, in order to combust all of the particles, which otherwise could block a distribution plate used in fluidized beds.

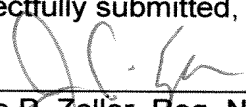
In contrast, oxygen is supplied to gas heaters 132 and 142 but is not directly supplied to the fluidized-bed in Joo. Therefore, it is impossible to expect the same efficiencies and the extremely advantageous effect of preventing blockage of the distribution plates, which is caused by fine particles from disclosures of Joo.

For all the foregoing reasons, it is submitted that the present application clearly patentably defines over the applied art, and an indication to that effect is solicited.

Should the examiner wish to discuss the foregoing or any matter of form in an effort to advance this application toward allowance, she is urged to telephone the undersigned at the indicated number.

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Respectfully submitted,

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